

News analysis

Australia: campaign gets smoking parents to cut down

A campaign to protect children from environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) has achieved a significant level of behaviour change by smoking parents. The "Car and home: smoke free zone" campaign resulted in a 55.7% increase in the number of reported smoke-free homes occupied by smokers with children aged under 6. There was also a 41.8% increase in the number of reported smoke-free cars.

ETS exposure can cause children problems from asthma, lower respiratory tract infections such as pneumonia and bronchitis, coughing, wheezing, middle ear infections, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). It has also been linked to an increased risk of bacterial meningitis, learning difficulties, autism, behavioural problems, and heart disease.

The ETS and Children Project was launched in 2002 in New South Wales (NSW) to limit the exposure of children aged 0–6 to ETS in the car and home environment. Campaign activity was funded by a \$A2.4 million (US\$1.8 million) grant from the NSW Department of Health and was run by a taskforce of government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The main message of the campaign was summarised in the slogan "Car and home: smoke free zone" and parents and carers were asked to make their homes and cars smoke-free by going outside if they needed to smoke and by asking visitors to do the same.

Resources were developed to deliver the campaign message in English and a number of local community languages, which were reinforced in three mass media campaigns. Commercials aired all over the state on television and radio, supported by billboards and stories and features in newspapers and magazines. Health professionals and childcare workers were also targeted, to encourage them to include information about the health risks of ETS in their



The "Car and home: smoke free zone" campaign, launched in New South Wales in 2002, has proved successful in persuading smoking parents to reduce their children's exposure to secondhand smoke.

discussions with parents who smoke. This helped spread the message among the target audience, as well as increasing the sustainability of the campaign message beyond the project's lifespan.

Although smoking rates continue to decline in NSW (the daily rate is 17.2% for males and 15.8% for females), rates for Aboriginal and other culturally and linguistically diverse groups remain much higher. It was a priority for the project to reach these groups, in view of their children's ETS exposure being correspondingly high, too.

A community grants scheme enabled local groups to conduct culturally appropriate projects within their own communities. The funding for each group varied according to the scope and size of their proposal and the type of activity they wished to undertake, and ranged from \$A4850 to \$A30 000 (US\$3600–22 500). Applicants for the grants were required to work with at least one of the organisations represented on the taskforce, which led to the formation of strong networks.

Some grants translated existing resources into community languages with the result that information is now available in Arabic, Assyrian, Bosnian, Croatian, Farsi, Greek, Khmer, Italian, Mandarin, Samoan, Serbian, Spanish, Tongan, and Vietnamese. Some grant recipients adapted resources to ensure that they were both linguistically and culturally appropriate for their community. For example, the issue of hospitality was seen as a potential barrier to making the home smoke-free for some Arabic speaking people, as they did not want to offend visitors by asking them to smoke outside. The slogan developed

by this language group focused on this issue "Your visit benefits us, but your smoke harms us". Another grant targeting Pacific Islander groups found that the campaign slogan conveyed a different meaning to the one intended. For some of the Samoan language groups "Car and home: smoke free zone" was taken literally, meaning, "This is an area where you are free to smoke". The resource developed for this community used the slogan "Smoking makes kids sick. Smoke outside your home and car". Culturally specific resources were also developed for use by Aboriginal communities, including professional development material for Aboriginal health workers.

The campaign has been rigorously evaluated. By the end of the campaign period 73% of homes with a smoker and children aged 0–6 years reported being totally smoke-free with a further 18% reporting they did not smoke when their children were in the same room. This is considered a great result and a good example of what can be achieved when government and NGOs work together. It is also encouraging to see those parents and carers who are unable to quit, change their smoking behaviour to protect the health of their children.

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Lebanon: water pipe line to youth

Most Arab countries, like many other low to middle income nations, are still in the relatively early stages of the



In Lebanon, youth and women are the target of a marketing campaign featuring a new tobacco product for use with the more traditional water pipe.

cigarette tobacco epidemic. Lebanon has the dubious position among Arab countries of being the only one with relatively equal rates of cigarette smoking among men and women. The water pipe is a traditional form of tobacco smoked in Arab countries, including Lebanon. Recently, trends have shifted between tobacco types, and water pipe smoking is becoming the preference for young people and women specifically, ousting the once more popular cigarette. As an indicator of its popularity, thriving new delivery services have appeared, linked to mobile phones. By using their phones in accordance with prescribed directions, customers can even specify the number and flavour of pipes they want. According to how many times they call the sales line, the appropriate water pipe(s) will be delivered to their home for the equivalent of just US\$1 dollar apiece.

Taking advantage of this visible trend, the state subsidised tobacco company recently launched a new tobacco product for use with the water pipe. It is clearly aimed at the youth market—its name, “Shabablek”, literally translates as “Youthful”. Its advertisements depict young men and women enjoying evenings out on the town. Ironically, with an eye on an ever “health conscious consumer”, the new product comes in individually wrapped portions (hitherto in large bales) and the promise that it has not been touched by human hands. The new product got an unmistakable boost by being launched under the aegis of the minister of finance, indicating a continuing focus on short term financial gain, rather than long term health planning.

Wedge at the end of the Mediterranean, Lebanon strives to find its way between differing cultures and continents. The images promoted by

multinationals and more recently the state sponsored tobacco companies are of hip, trendy, and successful young persons enjoying the ideals more commonly attributed to the west. Most recently, a picture of a bikini clad young woman lying beside a swimming pool in Beirut and smoking a water pipe was widely circulated. To traditionalists, such pictures will undoubtedly portray an image of Lebanon not welcomed by the eastern world. But to others, it will seem an affirmation of the country's future prosperity. To those who want to profit from western minded young consumers, such images must seem like helpful free marketing. Whatever their cultural significance, the lifestyle they illustrate has serious implications for the health of future generations of Lebanese people.

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USA: TIME's lingering double standard

The cover of TIME magazine on 17 October 2005 invited readers to learn about “living better longer”. There was no tobacco advertisement on the back cover that week, but the following week it was business as usual with a Camel ad depicting a young female model. US health advocates say this illustrates a recent trend: when a publication carries a major health article heralded on the cover, the rest of the magazine tends not to contain tobacco advertising, but it resumes in the next issue. In the past, it was not unusual to find a striking announcement of a health article on the front cover, and a full page cigarette advertisement on the back of the same issue (see the TIME covers shown in

Tobacco Control 2003;12:338). Some think the latest trend marks a minor step forward, while others reckon it is merely a refinement of double standards. The real motivation is probably commercial: tobacco companies know that, as in politics, a week is a long time for the truth about smoking to linger, allowing the glamorous fable to be resumed untainted.

India: still at the bravery game

In our last issue, we reported the good news that Godfrey Philips, Indian subsidiary of Philip Morris, had decided to abandon the bravery awards scheme it had used so successfully for many years to promote its Red & White cigarette brand (see *Tobacco Control* 2005;14:297). However, it has already become apparent



TIME still carries advertising for tobacco products, although now not usually in the same issues as those featuring articles focusing on health.